

QA-161
Dyre Betton House
102 South Liberty Street
Centreville
Private

1794

The Dyre Betton House is the earliest positively dated house within the original bounds of Centreville. It was built in 1794 by Dyre Betton on Lot No. 18, which he purchased from Elizabeth Nicholson in July of that year for £50. The date is clearly marked in the north gable with glazed header bricks. Both the size and construction of the building demonstrate that it was among the largest and most valuable houses in early Centreville, as confirmed by a tax assessment of 1797, in which the property was valued at \$2000, the third highest assessment in the town. Later alterations and a major addition made in 1885 have concealed or replaced much of the original interior. Fortunately, much of this later work is of exceptional quality, and today the house is noteworthy for its fine late 19th century interior as well as the original 18th century exterior.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Dyre Betton House

AND/OR COMMON

102 South Liberty Street

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Southwest corner of Liberty Street and Water Street

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Queen Anne's

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. John A. Covert

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

102 South Liberty Street

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21617

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Queen Anne's County Courthouse

Liber #: CWC 21

Folio #: 310

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

QA-161

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Dyre Betton House is located on the southwest corner of Liberty Street and Water Street in Centreville. It is a large brick house, two-and-one-half stories high, five bays wide and one room deep, with flush chimneys at each end of a pitched gable roof. A one story porch with brick piers and brick four-center arches stretches across the south facade, and a two story frame addition extends from the southwest corner of the west (rear) facade. The size and location of this house makes it one of the more prominent buildings in town, but the most distinguishing feature of the house is the date "1794" set into the upper north gable wall with glazed header bricks.

The front (east) facade is laid in Flemish bond above a quarter-round water table and a three-course bond foundation. The door is located in the center bay, flanked by two windows with modern one-over-one sash on each side. There are five one-over-one windows on the second floor, and three six-over-six pitched roof dormers on the third floor. The first and second floor windows

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

QA-161

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1794, 1885

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dyre Betton House at 102 South Liberty Street is the earliest positively dated building within the original bounds of Centreville. It was built in 1794 by Dyre Betton on Lot No. 18, which he purchased from Elizabeth Nicholson in July of that year for £50.⁽¹⁾ The date is clearly marked out with glazed header bricks in the north gable of the house. Both the size and construction of the building demonstrate that it was among the largest and most valuable houses in early Centreville, as confirmed by a tax assessment of 1797, in which the property was valued at \$2000, the third highest assessment in the town.⁽²⁾ Later alterations and a major addition made in 1885 have concealed or replaced much of the original interior. Fortunately, much of this later work is of exceptional quality, and today the house is noteworthy for its fine late nineteenth century

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

QA-161

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Orlando Ridout V, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Queen Anne's County Historical Society

DATE

1/26/79

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Centreville

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.1 DESCRIPTION

have flat splayed jack arches. The original cellar windows have been covered by the early 20th century brick porch. The center door has a leaded transom and paneled soffit and jambs. The present cornice consists of an early if not original box cornice with crown mold and bed mold that stopped just short of the corners. It has been extended, however, probably in the latter half of the 19th century, and now returns at the corners and is carried up the gable eaves.

Both gables and the rear facade are laid in three-course bond above and below the water table. A two-course belt-course extends across both gables at the second floor eave line, and a three-course belt course is carried the length of the rear facade between the first and second floors. It can be assumed that a similar belt course exists on the front facade, hidden from view by the porch roof.

The first and second floors are uninterrupted by window or door openings on the north gable wall, but two small windows flank the chimney in the upper gable. On the south gable, there are large one-over-one windows flanking the chimney on the first and second

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.2 DESCRIPTION

floor, and small windows on the third.

All but the northern two bays of the rear facade are covered by a late 19th century addition. Large one-over-one windows are located in the exposed bays on both the first and second floor. A bulkhead entrance to the cellar in the second bay still serves as the only access.

The rear addition is four bays long and two stories high. The north facade and west gable are quite plain, but the south facade is enhanced by a five-sided "tower" with banks of double hung sash windows. A stone in the foundation of the east side of the tower bears the following inscription:

Palmer 1885

Very little remains of the original interior, due largely to the 1885 addition and to renovation work believed to have occurred circa 1910. The original center hall floor plan remains basically intact, but the walls have been opened up and now act more as screens. The original mantels and woodwork are gone, but have been replaced with an interesting array of turn-of-the-century detail. The north parlour

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.3 DESCRIPTION

fireplace is of particular interest, as it is constructed of molded decorative bricks. These form a molded panel in the center flanked by bands of fluted bricks, while bands of molded bricks form a cornice above. The chair rail and wainscot paneling are also 20th century, but quite pleasing. Also of note are the superb parquet floors found throughout the first floor of both the early house and the 1885 addition. These are made of narrow strips of oak, with a herringbone pattern along the walls set off by darker strips of what appears to be walnut.

The original stair was replaced with a grand Victorian stairway in the rear addition. This consists of a closed string stair that rises along the south and west walls of an open stair hall directly to the rear of the original front hall. It is dominated by a massive decorative newel post featuring a molded capital and base, carved floral medallions, and a dentil block band around the top. The ballusters are turned; the area below the carriage is paneled. A large room opening off of the south wall of the stair hall is brightly lighted by the banks of windows in the previously described tower. The floor in this room is also parquet, with a band of geometric patterns

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.4 DESCRIPTION

outlined in contrasting shades of wood.

The second floor is relatively plain and has been renovated at least twice. The only surviving original trim consists of the window and door surrounds in the north chamber.

The third floor is partitioned into a center stair hall and two chambers. The partitions are constructed of vertical beaded boards covered with whitewash, and later plastered. The rafters and collar beams were originally exposed and whitewashed, but were later plastered with riven lath and machine nails. Four-panel doors remain on both partitions. The original paint scheme of Spanish red styles and rails and grey panels remains visible.

An early dormer window, probably dating to the mid-19th century, remains in place on the south end of the rear facade. It has been covered by the roof of the later addition and remains almost perfectly preserved. It has a beaded frame, with a simple molded cornice that returns at the corners, a feature commonly associated with the mid-19th century. The absence of wrought nails reinforces the conclusion that this is not an original dormer.

CONTINUATION SHEET

7.5 DESCRIPTION

The cellar below the main house is divided into two rooms by a brick partition below the north wall of the first floor hall. There is a large fireplace in the south chimney base, but it has been bricked up and is no longer functional. The present bulkhead entrance was originally a window, but was enlarged to replace the original entrance, which was apparently located in the southwest corner of the south room. One early window frame remains, most of the other openings have been bricked up. A small store-room has been partitioned off in the northwest corner of the north room, and the door is a beautiful example of a raised six-panel door, evidently salvaged from the upper floors during renovation.

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

interior as well as the original eighteenth century exterior. Among the more distinguished features of the interior are the parquet floors on the first floor, a grand Victorian stair in the 1885 wing, and an unusual terra cotta brick fireplace in the north parlour. Earlier details of interest include a perfectly preserved circa 1840 dormer window covered by the later addition and two paneled doors on the third floor with the original contrasting color scheme still visible.

Despite the apparent wealth of the builder, Dyre Betton, little is known of him, and he died very soon after the house was constructed. The 1797 tax assessment lists the property under "Dyre Betton heirs". On the 1798 Federal Direct Tax, the owner is listed as Sarah Betton, Dyre's wife. Included is the following description of the property⁽³⁾

Lot No. 18 in Centreville, one acre.

- 1 dwelling house, brick, two stories, 40 x 20. (The actual dimensions are 40'-4"x19'-3").
- 6 windows 66 x 28, 9 windows 56 x 28, 4 windows 24 x 20.
- 1 meat house 12 x 12
- 1 stable, log 20 x 14
- 1 small garden house

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Following the death of her husband, Sarah Betton remarried, to Ferdinand Sliney of Queen Anne's County. In 1809, Sarah, her son, Basil Betton, and her daughter, Rebecca Sliney, sold the house and lot to Dr. Perry E. Noel, a prominent local physician.⁽⁴⁾ After Noel's death, the property was offered at public sale in 1816, and in 1820 a deed was executed transferring it to Thomas Murphy for \$2700.⁽⁵⁾

The house eventually passed into the Palmer family, and remained in their possession throughout much of the 19th century. In 1882, following the death of Annie E. Palmer, a deed of partition was executed transferring the house and lot to James B. Palmer, one of two brothers and heirs at law.⁽⁶⁾ Shortly thereafter, the large wing was added to the rear of the house and major renovation work was undertaken on the interior. A cornerstone on the south facade of the wing records the date, 1885, and is inscribed "Palmer".

In 1898 the property was sold out of the Palmer family, to Alfred Green.⁽⁷⁾ The purchase price was \$3200. After Green's death, the property passed to his wife, M. Isabelle Green,⁽⁸⁾ and in 1934 it was

CONTINUATION SHEET

8.3 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

sold to Abraham Epstein.⁽⁹⁾ The house remained in the Epstein family until 1966, when it was purchased by John and Nancy Covert, the present owners.⁽¹⁰⁾

Footnotes

- (1) Deeds, STW 3, folio 44. July 23, 1794.
- (2) Tax Assessment of Centreville, Maryland. May, 1797.
- (3) Federal Direct Tax of 1798: Wye Hundred.
- (4) Deeds, STW 10, folio 486. December 22, 1809.
- (5) Deeds, TM 2, folio 212. April 21, 1820.
- (6) Deeds, SCD 2, folio 83, September 12, 1882.
Also refer to JP 3, folio 347. August 6, 1857.
- (7) Deeds, WHC 7, folio 434. April 11, 1898.
- (8) Wills, WTB 3, folio 415. October 29, 1932.
- (9) Deeds, BHT 17, folio 272. February 9, 1934.
- (10) Deeds, CWC 21, folio 310. April 25, 1966.
For transactions within the Epstein
family see Deeds, ASG Jr. 14, folio 5 (1946)
and TSP 27, folio 576 (1956).

CENTREVILLE

QUEEN ANNE C9

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County Commissioners.

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N. Attorneys-at-Law.

orney-at-Law.

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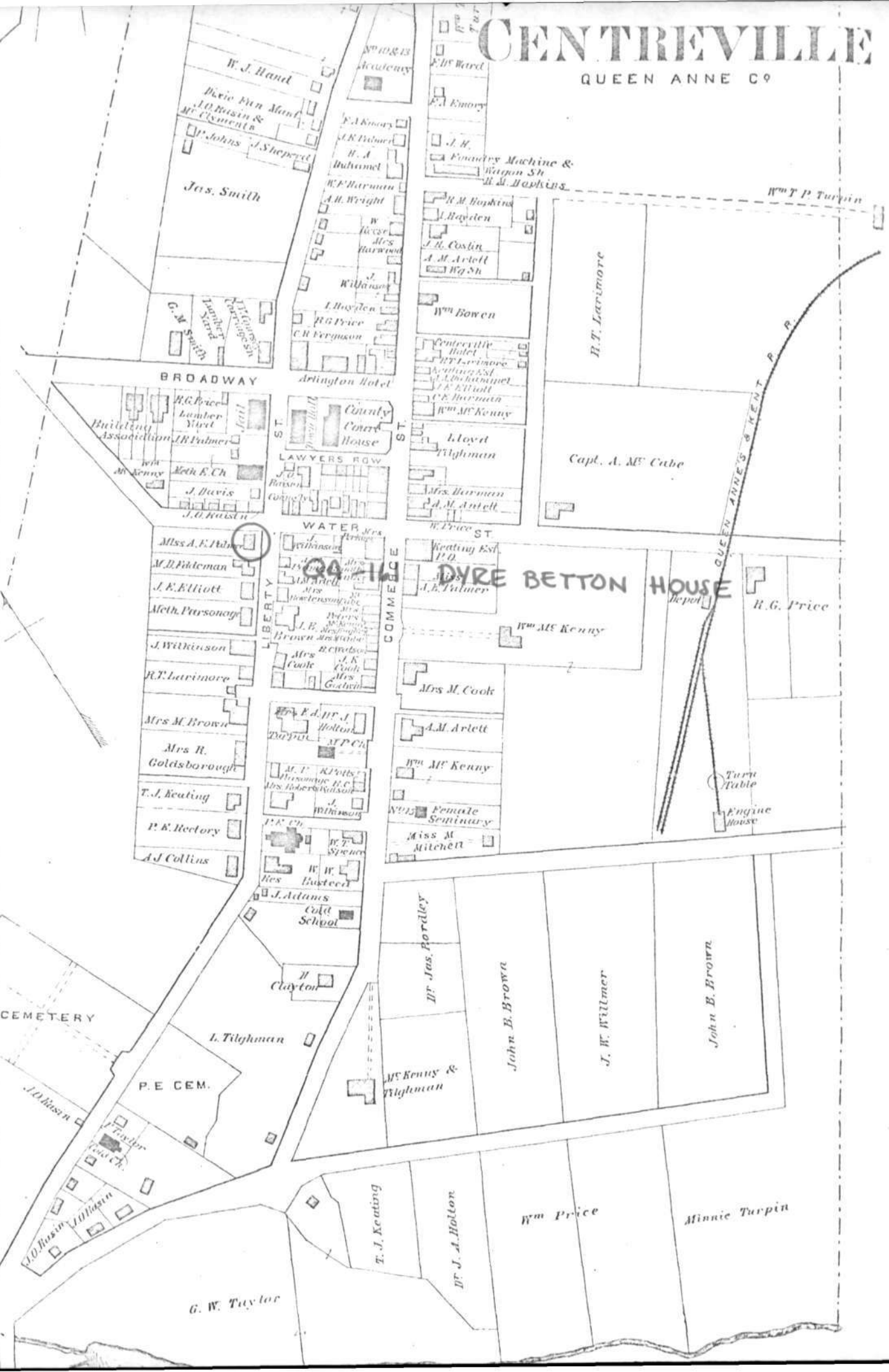
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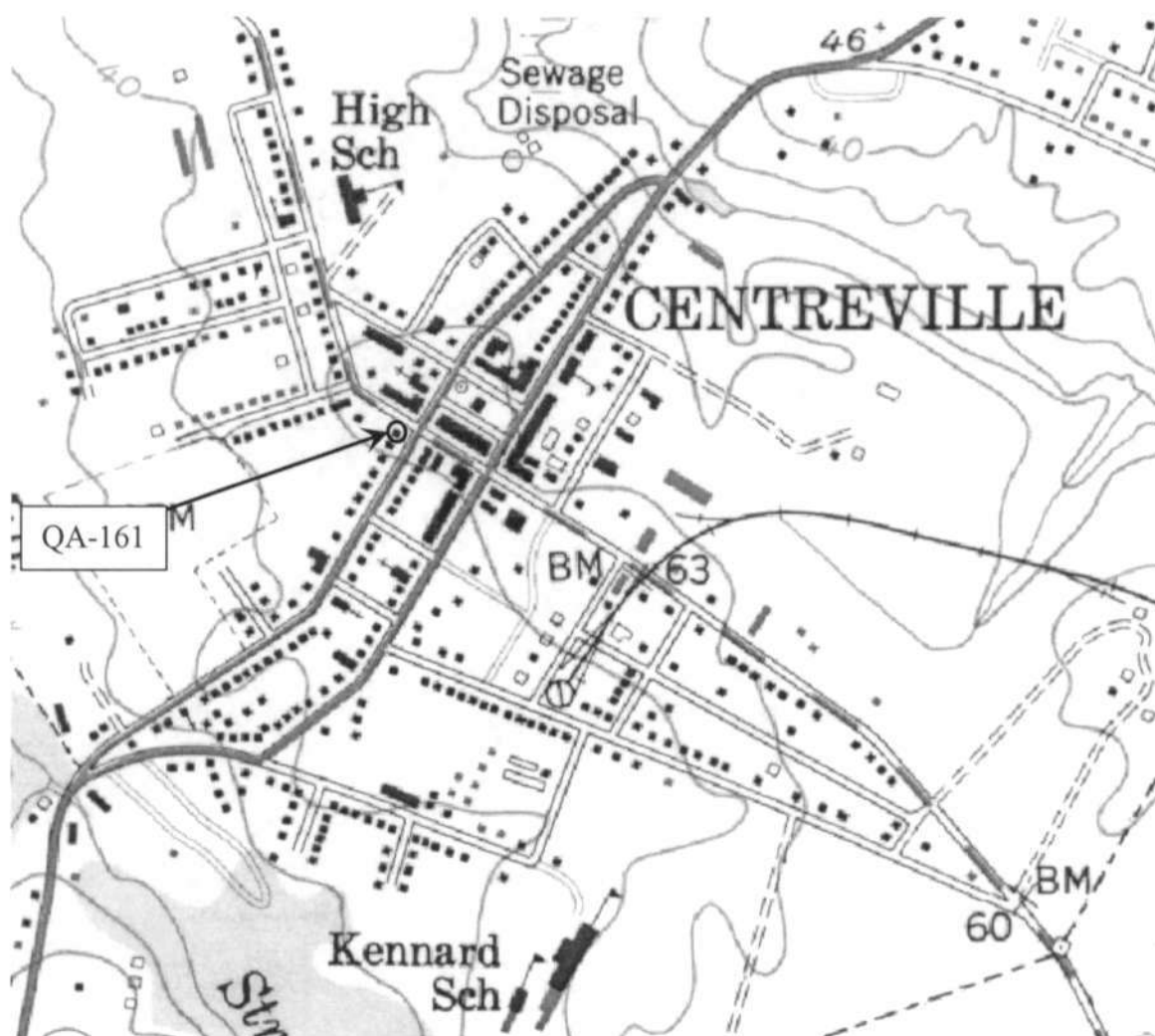
place

Stock Dealer.

uns and Ex-Sheriff.

alist and Farmer.

QA-161
Dyre Betton House
102 S. Liberty St.
Centreville
Centreville Quad.
Queen Anne's Co.



QA-161
Dyre Betton House

Mary McCarthy
Spring/Summer 2003
Digital color photo on file at MHT





QA-161 Dyre Betton House (1794)
102 S. Liberty St.
Centerville
OK V 1978



QA-161 Dyre Betton House
102 S. Liberty St
Centreville, Md.
ORV 1978



QA 161

Dyre Betton House
102 South Liberty St.



QA-161